



# THE POSSIBILITY OF USING LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS TO FUNNEL STUDENT TRANSLATORS' POST-ONLINE-EXCHANGE REFLECTIONS TOWARDS THE METACOGNITIVE ELEMENTS OF TRANSLATOR COMPETENCE

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**Abstract:** *The use of collaboration and teamwork is being advocated as a means of developing translator competence in translation education courses at university level. The most optimal telecollaborative work mode facilitating the development of a wide range translator competences seem to be team translation projects, another are On-line Intercultural Exchange (OIEs), aimed primarily at developing students' intercultural communication competence. However, they can also be used to further the metacognitive components of translator competence. This paper demonstrates how that can be achieved by analysing linguistically excerpts of students' online communication in an OIE with a view to investigating to what extent this kind of analysis, when performed by students themselves, can potentially foster metacognitive competence.*

**Keywords:** virtual exchange; translator education; translator competence; intercultural competence.

## INTRODUCTION

OIEs, which involve teacher-guided online intercultural interaction between geographically distant groups of students (O'Dowd, 2017), have been implemented in educational contexts for nearly three decades, and by many, e.g. Lewis and O'Dowd (2016), they are now recognised as the mainstream of foreign language instruction. However, in the course of their proliferation, they have also successfully entered other areas of education, including translator training (cf. Marczak, 2019). The relevance of OIEs for translator education stems from the fact that they do not only foster translation students' intercultural competence, but also other vital components of translator competence, as the present papers demonstrates.

## **1. METACOGNITIVE COMPONENTS OF TRANSLATOR COMPETENCE AMENABLE TO DEVELOPMENT VIA ONLINE INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGES**

### **1.1. The Importance of Metacognitive Competences in Translation Courses**

Competences indispensable to translators have been thoroughly discussed in the professional literature, e.g. by Alves and Gonçalves (2007), Risku, Dickinson and Pircher (2010) or Gouadec (2007). However, in order to design the translator education process, it is most desirable to look towards models which were proposed with pedagogical intent in mind. The frequently cited and implemented pedagogical models are the PACTE model (PACTE, 2003), and the EMT models (EMT, 2009; 2017), compiled by the EMT Expert Group. It is the EMT model, however, that can be viewed as seminal in that it has moulded translator education at university level across Europe, informing 84 (EMT, 2020) MA programmes in Translation Studies delivered by tertiary-level institutions networked under the auspices of the EMT quality label. All of these models emphasise the importance of knowledge, both declarative, procedural and instrumental, which – in a more or less direct manner – brings to the fore the indispensability of self-learning and life-long learning skills for translation students and translation professionals.

The PACTE (2003) model comprises six major constituent competences, known as sub-competences. The central element of the model is (i) strategic sub-competence, which covers the ability to plan and evaluate the translation process, activate relevant sub-competencies, compensate for deficiencies, identify translation problems and apply adequate solutions with view to ensuring efficiency, and the remaining components which are subordinate to it. The remaining components are: (ii) bilingual sub-competence, including pragmatic, socio-linguistic, textual and lexical-grammatical knowledge in the languages between which the translator operates; (iii) extra-linguistic sub-competence, which embraces encyclopaedic, thematic and bicultural knowledge; (iv) translation knowledge sub-competence, which entails the knowledge of translation processes, translation methods, procedures and the profession *per sé*; (v) instrumental sub-competence, covering knowledge about the use of documentation sources and translation technologies in the translation process; and (vi) psychophysiological factors affecting the translation process, such as memory, attention span and perseverance, as well as psychomotor mechanisms.

Both the older EMT model (EMT, 2009) and its updated version (EMT, 2017), delineate a similar set of competences, including: (a) language and culture competence, including communication skills, as well as transcultural and sociolinguistic awareness; (b) translation competence, covering strategic, methodological and thematic competence; (c) technology competence, entailing skills pertaining to translation technologies; and (d) service provision competence. Yet, it is noteworthy that the latest model singles out (vi) personal and interpersonal competence, including self-learning, self-assessment, and collaborative learning skills, as a separate component.

Thus, it corroborates the propositions of Gile (2009) and Coban (2015), who underline the vitality of: (i) life-long learning and continuous self-development; as well

as (ii) self-regulated learning, including planning, self-monitoring, and self-reflection, respectively.

1.2. Developing Metacognitive Competences via OIEs

Since the EMT model can be treated as the overarching list of competences to be developed in translation courses, it is reasonable to analyse which of its metacognitive constituents – as delineated by the EMT Expert Group (EMT, 2017) – could be developed through OIEs. The results of such an analysis are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Developing metacognitive competence via OIEs

EMT Competence	Constituents possible to develop via OIEs	Constituents difficult to develop via OIEs
Personal/interpersonal	Planning, time management Complying with deadlines, instructions Using social media, Self-reflection, self-learning skills	—

Source: Own work.

As it can be seen, the major competence which appears to be particularly fit to development via OIEs covers a set of metacognitive skills (Personal and interpersonal competence).

In online exchanges, students can improve their personal and interpersonal skills, including the ability to plan actions, do time management, meet deadlines, follow instructions, use social media responsibly and telecollaborate with project partners. At the same time, they can also reflect on their project experience, interaction with partners and the learning process, which – as Byram (2008) underlines – are all essential for effective intercultural education.

2. LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPING SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF TRANSLATOR COMPETENCE

Interactions in OIEs can be subjected to various types of analyses, which can foster post-experience reflections, and thus enhance intercultural development. Such analyses can examine the affective, cognitive, behavioural (verbal and non-verbal) and meta-cognitive elements of intercultural awareness, fostering the development of students’ knowledge, skills, and awareness. An example of linguistic analysis that can be used to examine online communication, and thus foster intercultural learning, has been discussed by Wise and Chiu (2011). Another idea comes from Chiu (2000), who demonstrates how the interactive actions of individuals collaborating within a team can be analysed in terms of their properties and contribution to problem-solving. The present paper focuses on the applicability of linguistic analysis to the development of the EMT competence which comprises metacognitive skills, i.e. Interpersonal and personal competence, particularly with regard to self-learning and self-assessment.

An example of linguistic analysis which can be used to develop the above-cited skills and which directly relates to the research conducted by the present author comes from Ryshina-Pankova (2018), who demonstrates how abstract aspects of intercultural communication competence, as proposed by Byram (1997), can be operationalised and assessed with the use of a method based on Eggins and Slade's (1997) systemic-functional linguistic analysis. She examined the interactions of a group of American university-level learners of German and German university students within a telecollaboration project in which the partners used synchronous written online chat as a means of communication in order to demonstrate the discursive moves used by the students and the language resources through which those moves were realised.

The type of interactional moves which Ryshina-Pankova (2018) analysed fell into four groups: initiating moves, responding moves, continuing moves and rejoinder moves, as they had been discussed by Eggins and Slade (2011). The initiating moves did not relate to previous moves in the discourse under analysis, they aimed at directing the chat discussion towards a particular issue and were operationalised as commands, statements as facts, statements as opinions, as well as open and closed questions as facts and opinions.

The responding moves involved the chat participants' reactions to their interlocutors' interactional moves and included three sub-categories: (i) interaction-supporting moves, e.g. respond-answer, respond-agree, respond-register, and respond-acknowledge moves; (ii) interaction-developing moves, including respond-elaborate, respond-extend and respond-enhance moves; and (iii) confronting moves, which covered: respond-contradict, respond-withhold moves.

The continuing moves were those which particular interlocutors made in order to build up their previous moves, through continue-elaborate, continue-extend and continue-enhance moves, while rejoinder moves comprised moves which were made in order to "(...) deepen the conversation even further through alignment and disalignment strategies" (Ryshina-Pankova, 2018, p. 223). The alignment moves were attempts to elicit more information (rejoinder-clarify), verify information (rejoinder-confirm), provide more information for confirmation (rejoinder-probe) or provide clarifications (rejoinder-resolve). The disalignment moves were realised through rejoinder-challenge moves, which would question the interlocutors' right to voice their opinion, rejoinder-rebound moves, which would question the legitimacy or relevance of a previous move, rejoinder-refute moves, which would contradict a challenge, or rejoinder-rechallenge moves, which would carry an alternative position. Another two moves (respond-evaluate and continue-evaluate) were also introduced by Ryshina-Pankova (2018) to cover the interlocutors' evaluative comments.

Additionally, Ryshina-Pankova (2018) identified the mood types, as discussed by Halliday (1994), through which the above-cited moves were realised. The moods comprised the use of declaratives, WH-interrogatives, and polar interrogatives.

The analyses conducted by Ryshina-Pankova (2018) permit the examination of the discursive moves which the students used while chatting online and how specific moves were realised, but also the extent to which the moves revealed the students' attitude of openness and curiosity, discovery skills and the ability to change perspec-

tives, which are all elements of Byram's model of intercultural communication competence. The former two can be evidenced by the balance between the initiating and responding moves performed by both parties in an interaction and the degree of elaboration in which they involved. The latter can be traced through the production of rejoinder-disalignment moves, which are likely to contribute to a shift in students' perspectives.

In the light of the above, linguistic analysis seems to be a tool with which to examine students' interactions in OIEs with a view to stimulating metacognition (self-reflection and self-assessment), which in turn fosters the development of language and culture as well as personal and interpersonal competences.

### **3. FOSTERING BEHAVIOURAL, COGNITIVE AND METACOGNITIVE COMPETENCES IN THE GPE PROJECT: STREAMLINING STUDENTS' POST-EXPERIENCE REFLECTIONS THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE SEMANTIC MOVES**

#### **3.1. Research context, aims, sampling and procedures**

##### ***3.1.1. Context and research questions***

What follows is a recount of research which aimed to investigate how the linguistic analysis of students' discourse moves in an OIE could be used to develop their metacognitive (self-learning) skills.

The research was based on data elicited from students' written interactions automatically recorded by the synchronous chat application IceChat, which was used in the course of tandem work performed as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Global Understanding project – an intercultural online exchange organised by the Global Partners in Education (thegpe.net). The project aimed to develop the participants' online communication skills and involved in-class and out-of-class work. The in-class work involved six days of live online links between the partner institutions: East Carolina University, USA (ECU) and Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland (UJ) on which the participants worked in small sub-groups on each side alternating between two work modes: videoconferencing and email tandems, and discussed five project topics: (i) College Life; (ii) Family and Cultural Traditions; (iii) Meaning of Life and Religion; (iv) Stereotypes and Prejudices; and (v) Free Topic. The out-of-class work consisted in the performance of the Telecollaborative Project, where pairs of students from the partner institutions jointly prepared PPT presentations about selected aspects of each other's cultures.

The research was motivated by three research questions:

- RQ1: Which discourse moves did the randomly selected GPE project participants use in online chat exchanges?
- RQ2: What can be inferred from the discourse patterns and their realisations?
- RQ3: How can the results of the linguistic analysis, as worded in RQ1 and RQ2, be potentially useful for developing the metacognitive components of translator competence?

### 3.1.2. Sampling and procedure

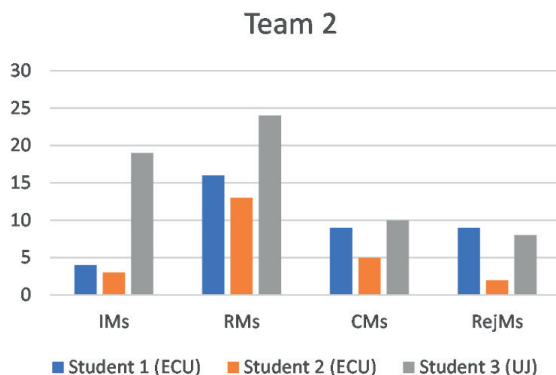
Research data have been collected on a convenience basis from 6 teams which participated in the Global Understanding project (14 students in total). However, since the present paper aims to only illustrate how the linguistic analysis of students' communicative performance in an OIE could be used to foster the development of metacognitive competence, the data selected for discussion here come from 3 students who happen to have worked in Team 2, all in their early twenties: 2 ECU students (both females, henceforth referred to as S1 and S2) and 1 UJ student (male, henceforth referred to as S3). The UJ student was majoring in Translation Studies, while his USA partners' major was health and natural sciences. The Polish student's documented competence in English was at the level of C1, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CoE, 2001).

The data selected for analysis were records of the students' fifty-minute long written online chat exchange in which they participated on a linking day in the classroom. To obtain data with which to answer RQ1, their conversations were analysed and coded for discourse moves in R's RQDA – the statistical program's plugin for qualitative data analysis. Subsequently, the distribution of specific discourse moves, which were discussed in section 2 of the present paper, was computed for each student within the two teams and bar charts were generated in MS Excel. The research data were subjected to further qualitative analysis, this time with a view to answering RQ2. The research results are presented below.

## 3.2. Results and discussion

### 3.2.1. Interaction in Team 2

As Figure 1 shows, the students produced the following discourse moves: S1 produced 4 initiating moves (IMs), 16 responding moves (RMs), 9 continuing moves (CMs) and 9 rejoinder moves (RejMs) at all. S2 produced 3 initiating (IMs), 13 RMs, 5 continuing moves (CMs) and 2 rejoinder moves (RejMs), while S3 produced 19 initiating (IMs), 24 responding moves (RMs), 10 continuing moves (CMs) and 8 rejoinder moves (RejMs).

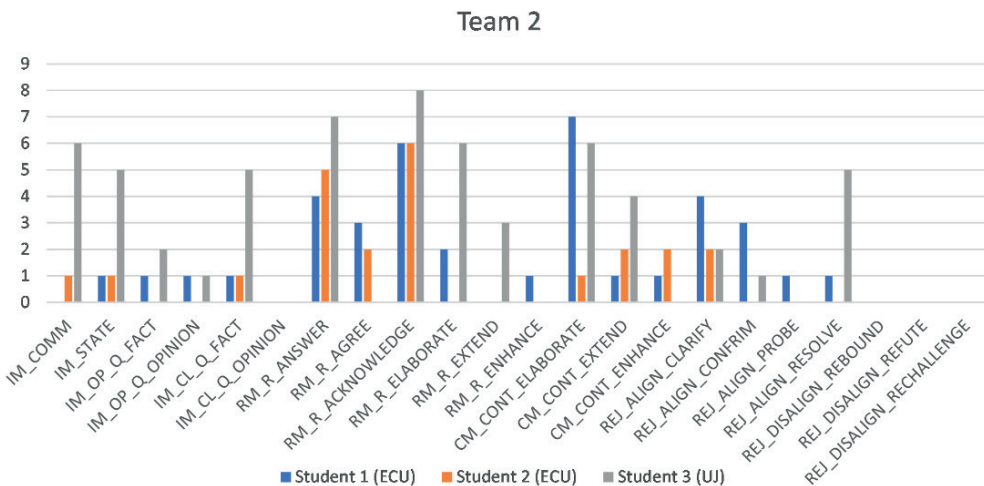


**Figure 1. Numerical Distribution of Discourse Semantic Moves in Team 2**

Source: Own work.



What strikes is the students' apparent intensive involvement in the conversation. First of all, all the students in Team 2 used the full range of the discourse moves under examination. S1 made 4 initiating moves (IMs), S2 made 3 such moves, while S3 produced 19 IMs. Even though S3 was the only representative of the Polish university in the conversation, he initiated the conversation more than both of his American partners, perhaps in an attempt to compensate for the disparity in representation. It might, however, also indicate their active involvement in the conversation at large, which finds substantiation in the relatively larger number of responding (24 RMs), continuing (10 CMs) and rejoinder moves (8 RejMs) which they produced in contrast to the number of these moves made by the other two partners: S1 and S2 (16 RMs and 13 RMs, 9 CMs and 5 CMs, and 9 and 2 CMs, respectively). It seems that S3 led the discussion by initiating most of its threads, while both ECU students and the UJ student contributed to topic development; the latter is corroborated by the aggregated numbers of RMs (29), CMs (14) and RejMs (11), which both ECU students produced, and which even slightly exceed the numbers of these moves made by S3. It demonstrates that the ECU students kept alternating their communication turns in response to the fact that they outnumbered S3 in the conversation and perhaps intentionally, they attempted to share the floor equally with S3. S1 one was more active in those attempts and produced more moves of each type than S2, but in total, there was a perfect balance between the number of moves made by the representatives of both international partners: ECU (61) and UJ (61). The actual realisations of particular discourse moves used by Team 2 members are presented graphically in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Distribution of Particular Types of Discourse Moves in Team 2**

Source: Own work.

Figure 2 demonstrates that students in Team 2 realised 18 different types of discourse moves. The moves which prevailed were answers to questions (S1=4, S2=5, S3=7) and instances of acknowledgement as responding moves (S1=6, S2=6, S3=8), as well as attempts to elaborate (S1=7, S2=1, S3=6) as continuing moves. What strikes is S3's

active involvement in the discussion, which manifested itself in the 6 initiating comments, 5 statements, 2 open and 5 closed questions about facts which were made by S3. They all by far exceeded the number of initiating comments (S1=0, S2=1), initiating statements (S1=1, S2=1), open questions about facts (S1=1, S2=0) and opinions (S1=0, S2=1), and closed questions about facts (S1=1, S2=1) and opinions (S1=0, S2=0) performed by the other two partners. In Team 2’s exchange, a range of rejoinder moves were also used in order to elicit clarification (S1=4, S2=2, S3=2), receive confirmation (S1=3, S2=0, S3=1), volunteer further information for confirmation (S1=1, S2=0, S3=0) or provide clarifications (S1=1, S2=0, S3=5), which seems to corroborate the idea that Team 2 members were quite engaged in the conversation. Again, one needs to allow for the fact that in Team 2, one UJ student interacted with two ECU students, the two ECU students needed to share the floor with each other and their partner; hence the smaller number of some moves, e.g. initiation moves, on their part. At the same time, the aggregated number of their other moves, e.g. respond-answer and respond-acknowledge moves, exceed the number of these moves made by S3. In conclusion, it may be stated that the conversation was generally relatively balanced, which finds reflection in the number of words the students used (S1=307 words, S2=339 words and S3=683). Given that S1 and S2 shared the floor, they produced a smaller number of words each, but when the word counts for both of them are accumulated, the sum (646) is nearly as large as that computed for S3. What merits notice is that in neither of the teams the interlocutors used any disalignment moves, the use of which might – in Ryshina-Pankova’s (2018) opinion – imply students’ attempts to shift their cultural perspectives. Even if such shifts do not occur, attempts to disalign create opportunities for questioning cultural phenomena and exploring them in greater depth, by dint of which intercultural learning is facilitated. Thus, the students should be encouraged to use disalignment moves in future exchanges. The analysis of moods realised through the questions asked by Team 2 members revealed that S1 and S3 asked 1 WH question and 2 polar questions each, while S2 asked 2 questions of each type (Table 2), which suggests that each of them at least at one point in the conversation tried to elicit more details from their interlocutor. At the same time, it is noticeable that each of the students used polar questions, which potentially limited the scope of intercultural exploration, as such questions narrow the response options to those which are already contained in the question.

**Table 2**  
**Numerical distribution of types of initiating moves in Team 2**

Mood types	Student 1 (ECU)	Student 2 (ECU)	Student 3 (UJ)
WH questions	1	2	1
Polar questions	2	2	2
<b>Total no. of words used in the exchange</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>683</b>

Source: Own work.



It is time now to answer RQ3 and consider how the data presented above can foster the development of the metacognitive components of translator competence. The contribution of the kind of linguistic analysis discussed above to the development of students' metacognitive skills and awareness is impossible to overlook. By reflecting on their own and their OIE partners' communicative performance students learn not only how to systematise reflection on a communicative experience and what criteria to utilise for self-assessment of language performance, but also how to interpret the results of their findings. They can subject their own performance to both qualitative and quantitative scrutiny. However, it must be underlined that students' linguistic analysis needs to be performed cautiously and take into account the numerous factors which can potentially affect the findings. After all, communicative behaviour can be influenced by e.g. the level of one's language competence, of which students must be aware.

Therefore, it seems reasonable that prior to the linguistic analysis, students are introduced to the notion of communication moves and their possible realisations, so that that their analysis is conducted in an informed manner. In the long run, they might use the analysis to identify their interactional strengths and weaknesses, plan and monitor their learning process and set personal learning goals, which would help them to orientate learning towards improvement in the most relevant areas.

In this way, they will learn how to operationalise particular target competences, collect evidence of progress, and make informed decisions about remedial action. By doing so, they will be able to develop personal competence, while also equipping themselves for effective self-reflection and self-learning.

## CONCLUSION

As it has been demonstrated, the metacognitive constituents of translator competence can be potentially developed by means of post-experience reflections, stimulated by the linguistic analysis of students' interactions in OIEs. What is more, the kind of analysis discussed above, can be easily extended, e.g. in order to cover cognitive and behavioural aspects of interaction, which would not only increase the scope of linguistic analysis, but also enrich the students' learning experience and ultimately, contribute to proliferating the learning outcomes.

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